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Action Alert from the East Timor *Action* Network

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East Timorese Continue to Sit-in at U.S. Embassy

Protests rock East Timor -- Crackdown Imminent

Recent events have thrust East Timor to center stage. Over the past week, East Timorese youth have seized the opportunity presented by the APEC summit and President Clinton's trip to Indonesia to demonstrate that they are determined to be free. Twenty-nine East Timorese remain camped at the U.S. embassy in Jakarta, and East Timorese youth have engaged in often angry protests in Dili and elsewhere in East Timor. They have captured the world's attention and challenge us to intensify pressure on the U.S. and Indonesian governments to deal seriously with human rights and self-determination for East Timor.

WITH THE DEPARTURE OF HEADS OF STATE AND THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS CORPS, THE EAST TIMORESE PEOPLE FACE AS SERIOUS A THREAT AS AT ANY TIME IN THEIR TRAGIC HISTORY. YOUR ACTION NOW CAN SAVE MANY LIVES!

The East Timorese broke through Indonesia's stage-managed APEC extravaganza, shattering its carefully crafted image as a nation engaged in orderly development of benefit to all. Instead, their actions revealed a military dictatorship that tramples the human rights of its own citizens and brutally and illegally occupies a neighboring country.

President Clinton went to Indonesia for four days, intending to pay lip service to human rights. Faced with the embassy protests and upheaval in East Timor, he inched U.S. policy a few steps forward. At a press conference he said that "the people of East Timor should have more say over their own local affairs," and he discussed this with Suharto. This is the first time a high U.S. official has raised the question of East Timor's political status in even such a moderate way. Secretary of State Warren Christopher said that Clinton "made it clear that human rights could be a limiting factor" in the US-Indonesia relationship. The first test will be how Indonesia responds to the current crisis.

East Timorese continue their peaceful protest inside U.S. embassy compound

Early on Saturday, November 12, 29 East Timorese students and workers climbed the spiked fence surrounding the U.S. Embassy compound in Jakarta, unfurling banners and shouting slogans for independence. More than a week later, they remain peacefully inside the compound, intent on continuing their protest until resistance leader Xanana Gusmão is released. "He is the only person who can represent us to deal with the Indonesian government for the independence of East Timor," their spokesperson said.

The U.S. has "no plans" to remove them. President Clinton has said that "we have been assured that there will be no retribution against them for exercising their political expression and bringing their concerns to us ... I feel comfortable that the commitment we've received will be honored." Others are not so certain and are concerned for their safety.

The protesters remain on a parking, lot in difficult conditions. They have received limited food and water and have no shelter or sanitary facilities. They have been allowed to meet with no one but embassy officials and are forced to shout to the press across the fence and a cordon of Indonesian military. Yesterday, one went to the hospital for treatment of an injury received when he scaled the fence; it is unclear how long they can endure the cold and rain.

Portugal has offered them transportation and political asylum, and the Indonesian and U.S. governments have said they will cooperate with this. The demonstrations have so far refused this offer.

In addition to the 29 who made it into the compound, about 50 others were arrested in Jakarta before they got to the Embassy. Some of these have been taken far from Jakarta, where they could be maltreated. Others have been released, while some remain in custody or have been re-arrested. Although we do not have reliable information as to their location or condition, many remain in Indonesian military hands, subject to torture or worse.

The East Timorese in the embassy parking lot are calling for self-determination for East Timor and the withdrawal of Indonesian troops. Their written petition to President Clinton asks him:

> "to make use of the great moral stature achieved by the United States of America through its condemnation of the violation of the fundamental rights of human beings and peoples to make the following demands of President Suharto:
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> 1. The release of East Timorese Resistance Leader, Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão, and of all East Timorese political prisoners.
> 2. That the President of Indonesia [talk with] ... the true representatives of the People of East Timor, including ... the East Timorese Church, CNRM, UDT and Fretilin.
> 3. That Jakarta grant access to an independent and impartial mission with the aim of conducting a serious investigation into the Santa Cruz massacre."

They also asked Clinton to "remind President Suharto" about long-serving, elderly Indonesian political prisoners, some of whom continue to face the death penalty after 30 years in jail, and to "exert pressure upon Jakarta" to recognize the right of Indonesian workers to organize and to free imprisoned labor union leaders.

Clinton responded to the pressure generated by their protest by mentioning human rights and East Timor publicly and with Suharto. Clinton should follow up by assertively involving the U.S. in finding a solution that respects East Timorese self-determination and actively supports human rights for the people of East Timor and Indonesia. The protesters are not asking for military intervention, but simply for Clinton to further press President Suharto do to things he should be doing anyway.

The East Timorese chose the United States because Washington has a special responsibility to help end 19 years of crimes against East Timor. In addition to approving the 1975 invasion and providing most of the weapons used to kill one-third of the East Timorese population, the leader of the "New World Order" has the economic and political clout to encourage Indonesia to do the right thing. The demonstrators ended their petition to Clinton with:

> "We firmly believe that the ethical concerns which have guided America's foreign policy in relation to other countries extend also to Indonesia, and thus we deposit great hope in the decisive influence which the United States of America is able to bring to bear in realizing a solution to the East Timor case which constitutes a flagrant violation of universal principles and of International Law."

Peaceful protests and disorder in East Timor

On Saturday, November 12, there were quiet observances of the anniversary of the 1991 massacre in Dili. Sunday began similarly, with a 700-strong Mass. Afterwards, several dozen marched peacefully, carrying Fretilin flags and banners calling for independence and for the support of President Clinton.

After the organized march, around a thousand young East Timorese "rampaged" through the streets of Dili, attacking property owned by Indonesians. Cars were burned, shops, hotels and houses stoned.

Demonstrators threw rocks and bottles at police, who responded with tear gas. There are reports of several deaths from police actions. By evening, the military had imposed a curfew. The trigger for the riot was the killing of an East Timorese man by an Indonesian transmigrant in a personal argument, but the causes are deep-rooted -- although Indonesia blames foreign journalists and "ethnic tensions."

The rioting continued on Monday and Tuesday. At least 260 people have been arrested. The University in Dili has been closed. The military is going house to house seizing people for questioning. Demonstrations and arrests have also taken place in other parts of East Timor. After several days of quiet, disorder erupted anew on Friday, when plainclothed police threw stones at soldiers and journalists to inflame a peaceful protest into a riot.

The East Timorese have justified grievances which cannot be cured by military repression. Violence against Indonesian property is an understandable demonstration of repressed anger and terror from nearly two decades of genocidal occupation. It cannot be stopped without addressing the underlying situation.

Journalists banned from East Timor

In a show of openness, Indonesia invited banned journalists to come to Indonesia during APEC. Allan Nairn and Amy Goodman were granted visas and told they would be able to travel. In 1991, Nairn and Goodman were forced to flee East Timor after being severely beaten while more than 271 East Timorese were killed by Indonesian troops. The New York-based journalists' award-winning reporting of the massacre helped to reawaken international awareness to the ongoing genocide.

On November 12, the pair was arrested as they attempted to cross from West Timor into East Timor. They were held for 20 hours and then sent to Jakarta. On Tuesday, they tried to fly to Dili, after notifying authorities, but they were forced off the plane in Bali.

On Nov. 19, **Indonesia restricted foreign journalists from entering East Timor;** those already there are being pressured to leave, and others are limited to two-day visits, with special government permission. Four journalists and an observer have already been deported. God only knows what will happen once no foreigners are there to see it.

Protests in the U.S.

On November 16, activists committed nonviolent civil disobedience at the Indonesian Embassy in Washington and their Consulate in San Francisco in support of the students at the US Embassy in Jakarta. Last week, memorial services, public meetings, and demonstrations took place around the U.S., and hundreds of people called or wrote President Clinton to urge him to support East Timor. ETAN encourages all to keep up the letters, phone calls and other protests. East Timor is at a turning point.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Urge President Clinton and U.S. officials to:

1) **support self-determination** for East Timorese. The U.S. should be actively involved in finding a solution that respects East Timorese self-determination and supports human rights for the people of East Timor and Indonesia.
2) **fully protect the rights of the 29 demonstrators** at the Embassy compound. The Timorese should be made as comfortable as possible during their stay, which could be prolonged; they are guests on American territory and should be treated as such. They should have access to food, water, sanitary facilities and shelter. They should be allowed to meet privately with media, attorneys and human rights activists. If any of the demonstrators asks to leave Indonesia, the U.S. government, working with the International Committee of the Red Cross, should ensure that they can do so safely.
3) **press Indonesia to account for and free the 49** East Timorese arrested en route to the demonstration. No reprisals should be taken against them or any others involved in the demonstration.
4) **send observers to East Timor** to help protect people there from reprisals by the military, and to make it clear to Suharto that the U.S. will not tolerate provocations or escalation of violence by Indonesian troops.

Ambassador Robert Barry, **United States Embassy, Jakarta.** Tel: 011-62-21-360-360. Fax 011-62-21-386-2259.

The **U.S. State Department** switchboard is 202-647-4000, fax 202-647-9519. The **White House** comment line is 202-456-1111; e-mail: president@whitehouse.gov (include your mailing address if you want a response). The **Congressional switchboard** is 202-224-3121.

Urge the Indonesian government to:

1) **start serious negotiations** leading to a referendum on self-determination with the legitimate leaders of East Timor, including Bishop Belo of the Catholic Church and Xanana Gusmão of the National Council of Maubere Resistance.
2) **fully account for and release anyone arrested** for involvement in the U.S. Embassy demonstration or in the protests in East Timor. Their must be no reprisals against East Timorese. Threats and random or targeted military revenge must be prevented.
3) **Stop all arrests, torture, and intimidation** against people of East Timor, and allow international human rights observers, journalists, and others freedom to travel to and within East Timor to verify that rights are respected.

The Indonesian Embassy to the United States
Ambassador Arifin Siregar, 2020 Mass. Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20036. Tel: 202-775-5200. Fax: 202-775-5365

Use the Media

1) **Urge the media to continue covering events** at the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta and in East Timor, and to keep journalists in East Timor. They should vigorously protest press restrictions, circumventing them when possible.
2) Although some of the media coverage has been excellent, it often distorts the essential nature of East Timor as a country under military occupation. **Write letters to the editor and call radio talk shows,** stressing that more than conventionally-defined "human rights" are at stake.

Demonstrate

December 7 is the 19th anniversary of the Indonesian invasion of East Timor. Demonstrations are planned for Washington, DC; New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles and Houston, and other cities. ETAN can help you organize a protest or educational event in your community that day.